(a) whether Government have formulated any scheme of promoting the use of gas in place of Naphtha as a fuel by urea producing units of the country;

(b) if so, the detailed outlines of the said scheme;

(c) total number of industrial units of the country under this scheme which are likely to use gas in place of Naphtha; and

(d) expenditure likely to be incurred by Government for the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI CHHATTRA PAL SINGH): (a) to (d) The primary consideration and goal of the new pricing scheme for urea units, made effective from 1.4.2003, is to encourage efficiency parameters of international standards based on the usage of the most efficient feedstock. Natural gas (NG)/Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), being an efficient feedstock for the manufacture of urea, besides being a clean and cost effective source of energy, facilitating the switchover of the existing non-gas based urea units to NG/LNG for feedstock/fuel is being considered for Stage-III. Preliminary estimates have revealed that in case of naphtha based plants, the estimated cost of conversion would be of the order of Rs. 20-25 crore, whereas in the case of FO/LSHS based plants, such cost would be of the order of Rs. 250 crore or more depending on the scope of revamp and engineering process. The cost differences are attributable to the size, vintage, technology of the plant etc.

At present there are 14 non-gas based urea units. Their switchover to NG/LNG will depend on the availability of NG/LNG, delivered price of NG/LNG and the infrastructure available. The cost of conversion is to be financed by the respective units.

Amount paid towards insurance by IDPL.

371. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited, Hyderabad Unit, got a group saving linked insurance scheme for 4181 employees from LIC in 1988;

(b) whether the company stopped payment of LIC premium realised from the salary of employees as a result of which policy lapsed with effect from April, 1992;

(c) whether it is a fact that 154 employees died from May, 1992 to February, 2002 while contribution towards LIC was being deducted from their salaries but not being remitted to LIC;

(d) if so, how much amount IDPL had to pay as insurance to the dependents of deceased; and

(e) why no responsibility for loss was fixed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI CHHATTRA PAL SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) According to the IDPL, the fact is that 145 employees had died during May, 1992 to February, 2002 and their contribution towards LIC deducted from salary was not remitted to LIC.

(d) The company had paid Rs. 73.25 lakhs approximately to the dependents of the deceased employees.

(e) According to the IDPL, there was no loss for the company because in any case company had to pay which has been settled now.

Availability of medicines at affordable prices

372. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of general misgivings and galore conditions imposed under which patented medicines/drugs would be available at affordable prices to developing countries under the WTO Agreement reached on 29th August, 2003;

(b) if so, whether Indian users of pharmaceutical companies would be in a position to draw the envisaged benefits without hassles and cumbersome procedures to adequately fight rising mass killer diseases like AIDS, TB, Malaria, etc.; and

(c) if so, how and what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI CHHATTRA PAL SINGH): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.